CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A system for providing interactive content to a broadcast presentation being displayed on a viewer display associated with a viewer device, said system comprising:

a broadcast receiver associated with said viewer device, said broadcast receiver receiving a broadcast presentation from a broadcast presentation provider;

a communication controller associated with said viewer device, said communication controller receiving interactive content associated with said received broadcast presentation from a source of interactive content; and

a dynamic display controller associated with said viewer computer, said dynamic display controller responsive to said received broadcast presentation and said received interactive content, for displaying said broadcast presentation and said interactive content on a viewer display.

2.   The system of claim 1, wherein said viewer display comprises a single-window layered display having:

a broadcast layer, for displaying said broadcast presentation in a background layer of said layered display; and

at least one overlay displayed in at least a second layer of said layered display on top of said broadcast layer on said

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single-window, layered display, said at least one overlay including said interactive content and having a substantially transparent background and allowing said broadcast presentation in said broadcast layer to be viewed through said at least one overlay.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein said source of interactive content comprises an interactive content server and at least one interactive content database, accessible over a computer network, and wherein said communication controller comprises a network controller.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein said computer network comprises a local area network (LAN)

5. The system of claim 3, wherein said computer network comprises a wide area network (WAN).

6. The system of claim 5, wherein said WAN comprises the Internet.

7. The system of claim 3, further comprising a broadcast presentation identifier identifying said broadcast presentation and a relevancy processor for identifying interactive content

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relevant to said identified broadcast presentation stored in said at least one interactive content database.

8. The system of claim 2 further comprising a viewer-selectable interactive content icon displayed on said at least one overlay, to allow a viewer to control the display of interactive content on said at least one overlay.

9. The system of claim 1, further comprising at least one input device for allowing a viewer of said broadcast presentation and interactive content to interact with said interactive content.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein said viewer display comprises a multi-window display having:

a first window, displaying said broadcast presentation; and

at least one additional window displaying said interactive content.

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11. A method of displaying interactive content relevant to a broadcast presentation and relevant to a viewer on a viewer display associated with a viewer device, said method comprising the acts of:

receiving, at said viewer device, a broadcast presentation from a broadcast presentation provider;

receiving, at said viewer device, relevant interactive content from a source of interactive content; and

merging and displaying said retrieved broadcast presentation and relevant interactive content on a viewer display device.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said act of receiving relevant interactive content comprises:

identifying said broadcast presentation received at said viewer device;

identifying at least one characteristic about said viewer;

responsive to identifying said broadcast presentation and identifying at least one characteristic about said viewer, searching a database of interactive content to identify any interactive content relevant to said identified broadcast presentation and to said at least one characteristic about said viewer; and

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retrieving said identified relevant interactive content.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein said act of receiving relevant interactive content comprises:

identifying said broadcast presentation received at said viewer device;

identifying at least one characteristic about said viewer;

accessing a remote database of interactive content over a computer network;

searching a database of interactive content to identify any interactive content relevant to said identified broadcast presentation and to said at least one characteristic about said viewer; and

transmitting said relevant interactive content to said viewer device over said computer network.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said acts of accessing said remote database of interactive content and transmitting said relevant interactive content over a computer network comprises accessing said remote database and transmitting said relevant interactive content over the Internet.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein said act of merging

and displaying said retrieved broadcast presentation and relevant interactive content on said viewer display device comprises displaying said broadcast presentation and said relevant interactive content on a single-window layered display wherein:

said broadcast presentation is displayed in a broadcast layer, said broadcast layer being a background layer of said layered display; and

said relevant interactive content is displayed in at least one overlay in at least a second layer of said layered display on top of said broadcast layer on said single-window, layered display, said at least one overlay having a substantially transparent background and allowing said broadcast presentation in said broadcast layer to be viewed through said at least one overlay..

16. The method of claim 11, wherein said act of merging and displaying said retrieved broadcast presentation and relevant interactive content on said viewer display device comprises displaying said broadcast presentation and said relevant interactive content on a multi-window display wherein:

said broadcast presentation is displayed in a first window of said multi-window display; and

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said relevant interactive content is displayed in at least one additional window of said multi-window display.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein said act of identifying said broadcast presentation received at said viewer device comprises receiving a viewer input containing an identifier for said received broadcast presentation.

18. The method of claim 12, wherein said act of identifying said broadcast presentation received at said viewer device comprises identifying said source of said received broadcast presentation, determining a date and time of receipt of said broadcast presentation and searching a schedule of broadcast presentations.

19. The method of claim 12, wherein said act of identifying said broadcast presentation received at said viewer device comprises identifying attributes of said broadcast presentation received at said viewer device, said attributes including a geographic location of said viewer device, a date and time of receipt of said broadcast presentation, and searching a database of broadcast presentations to identify a broadcast presentation corresponding to the attributes

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identified for said broadcast presentation received at said viewer device.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein said act of identifying a geographic location of said viewer device comprises inputting, at said viewer device a zip code associated with a location of said viewer device.

21. The method of claim 12, wherein said acts of searching and retrieving said identified interactive content relevant to said identified broadcast presentation utilizes a dynamically programmable and interdependent rule system including at least one rule selected from the group consisting of:

a rule limiting content to specific broadcast programming;

a rule limiting content to authorized users;

a rule limiting content to user affinity with an identified group of authorized users;

a rule limiting content to a specific geographical location; and

a rule limiting content to broadcaster permission.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein said dynamically

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programmable and interdependent rule system operates automatically.